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THE
BELFAST MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

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To the Editor of the Belfast Magazine.

SIR,

"ONE TOUCH OF NATURE MAKES US
ALL AKIN."

HUMAN nature is much the same in all countries. Face and features, and colour differ, but in the internal organization, there is little variety—all are selfish. The heart supplies itself with blood, before it yields a drop to the rest of the body. All possess sympathy, of whatever name, or nation they may be, and can communicate this universal language. Thus the Tartar Khan addresses himself to Michael Kamenskoy of the Russian army.

"Venerable, illustrious, great general,—My son Mahmud Gheary Sultan was said to have been killed in the battle fought by your and my troops. Therein consisted the will of God, and this is the fate of those who serve their religion and their monarch. You would not believe the assurances of the fore-named prisoners, but have sent the body with a guard, accompanied with the clergy of Gangura, with this request, that I should let you know whether it is really my son. *It is indeed my Son!*—and the good will you have shewn me by sending the same is particularly affecting to me. I send back, herewith, the two clergymen, and return you thanks with the tenderest emotions, and with many tears for the great favour you have shewn me." Every heart must feel the *touch of nature* expressed in this epistle, and every eye must see the hoary chieftain throwing his eyes

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fearfully, upon the corpse, and then raising them to Heaven.—"It is indeed my Sou."

"On Monday a slave court was held at the court-house in this town, when John, a Sambo, was tried on two indictments, the one for stealing sundry tools, the other for assaulting with intent to kill Mr. Bruce, an overseer of St. Faith's estate, in St. John, (how the name of Saint is prostituted on sugar plantations!) when he was found guilty on both indictments. He was sentenced to be hanged next morning, which sentence was accordingly put in execution. When this sentence was pronounced, he *thanked* the court, and said, *It was the best thing they could do for him.*" From many this address would draw laughter; from one at least, at this distance of time and place, and connexion, it seldom fails of drawing a tear. The sublime sometimes borders upon the ridiculous, and the pathetic also, on some occasions, vibrates between tears and smiles.

In Plutarch's description of Cato's behaviour on the last night of his existence, before he fell upon his sword, he thus writes. "*Now the birds begun to sing,* and Cato fell into a short slumber: at length Butis came back, and told him all was quiet in the Haven." There is here a touch of pathos in the contrasted quiet, and serenity of nature with the grandeur and sublimity of the mortal business then in procedure, that is singularly impressive and affecting. Far indeed is it from equaling (except its truth overcomes fiction) the sublime departure of Rhodan

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deric Dhu, in the Lady of the Lake,

"At first, the Chieftain to the chime,
With lifted hand, kept *feeble* time."

Lines, I think inimitably pathetic, when contrasted to those which are instantly recollected,

"The Mountaineer shot glance of pride,
Across Benledi's *living* side."

When, by an effort, we break loose from the fascination in which we are held by Mr. Scott's poetry, and step, as it were, out of "the charmed circle," we cannot help wishing that he would *aggrandize* his subjects, and that freebooters, mountaineers, lifters of cattle, and savage marauders, were not so often imposed upon us as heroes; in short, that his heroes were more truly heroic; we cannot help wishing that the border story would give place to an Epic Poem, worthy of immortality, not only by the embellishments of fancy, but the intrinsic excellence of a grave and grand morality, such as might instruct, delightfully, the remotest posterity. He ought to rouse himself from his fairy fictions and golden slumbers, from the plaudits of girls, and boys, and distrust the flush of popularity, he should chuse a subject, worthy of his name, his country, and his kind, and then shower down upon it the profusion of poetic beauty and creative imagination." *Quid cogitem, quæris*, (said Milton now mature of years) *ita me bonus Deus, Immortalitatem.* 'Tis true. There is an immortality in a Fairy Tale, in the Arabian Nights, in the Border Story, but there is a Miltonic immortality, fitted for the maturity of the individual, and for the manhood of a nation.

And indeed, I think, such immortality will never be gained, but by an adequate, and awful MORAL running through the whole poem, and fertilizing all the flowers of a poetic fancy; it should, throughout the

whole work, associate itself with some grand and actuating passion of *universal* human nature, such as religion or patriotism. The whole duty of man, and of woman too, may be learned from Milton, in various passages, solid in sense, yet sparkling with fancy, and which ought to be repositied in the memory, not for the pedantry of quotation, but for the better purpose of lessening the life in the calm recess of the heart. The fair pupil may pluck the moral from such passages, and get them by *heart* in the truest sense, as they would gather for their bosom fresh flowers from the stalk in the garden of Eden.

The poem which ranks next to that of Milton ("delectando pariterque monendo") in its power of fancy, and at the same time, its authority of intellect, is the *ODYSSEY* of Homer, a worthy *atonement* made by the great author, for forming, and fostering the love of war, the art of killing our fellow creatures, which he has so recommended in the *Iliad*. It is indeed an ill compliment to the feelings as well as to the taste of mankind in general, that such a poem as the *Iliad* should have so long reigned paramount in Epic excellence. Shame upon public opinion that has bestowed such inadequate praise upon the adventures of Ulysses, the wise, the venerable, and the patriotic! The much enduring man, who, with glorious and yet imitable perseverance, wrestles with the waves of ill-fortune, keeps his head buoyant above the tide, and holds up the scarf of hope and confidence in the protection of divinity. *Ἄλλ' ἔσθ' ἄν καὶ ἔμψιχα*. Such is the motto worthy of MAN, and such is the man worthy of the universal acclaim of mankind, reiterated and prolonged till times remotest bound.

Let then the mature poet mark

and meditate that performance so truly heroic in all its progress, and taking some theme of universal interest, replete with some noble and magnanimous passion, let him paint for immortality; not the immortality of a fairy fiction, but of an epic, which may instruct as well as please the remotest generations, and cover his name and his nation with such glory, that, in ages to come, there may arise a question whether the author was called from the country, or the country from the author. The name of WALTER SCOTT has diverted me, as by a charm, from the subject I designed to touch upon, at the beginning of this letter, and it is scarcely, worth returning to it.

A. P.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

THE PEACOCK.

"How rich the Peacock! what bright glories run
From plume to plume, and vary in the sun!
He proudly spreads them to the golden ray,
Gives all his colours, and adorns the day;
With conscious state the spacious round displays,
And slowly moves amid the waving blaze."

YOUNG.

OF all the feathered inhabitants of the earth, the peacock has most peculiarly attracted the admiration of mankind. The Greek Mythologists thought him a worthy attendant on "Heaven's imperial Queen." And the great Solomon conceived it not beneath his dignity to admire this splendid bird, and while collecting around him whatever could augment his glory, we find that he gave a particular order for procuring Peacocks along with other treasures of the East. Indeed few objects seem better calculated to convey an idea of princely grandeur, and decorate

the domains of majesty. The sapphire, emerald, and topaze, seem combined with the ruby in his ever varying plumage, and even amidst the vivid glow of tropical vegetation, the peacock shines conspicuous. Over all the Southern regions of Asia, from the spicy groves of Ceylon, to the cold mountainous lands of Thibet, this bird is found in a state of liberty, but it is said, no where of greater beauty and size, than on the banks of the Ganges, where, guarded by tigers and other tremendous animals, they enjoy the permanent attachment of their female, who after six tedious weeks of patient incubation, sees rise around her an active and almost independent family of five or six young, who from having their infant wings provided with quill-feathers, accompany their mother to some elevated branch, where they rest secure, under the enfolding wings of their affectionate parent, who gives, and who receives, the most tender carresses, and not until that period when nature calls to multiply their species, and give existence to other beings, is this maternal solicitude dissolved.

If the Count de Buffon's theory could be applied to birds, that the life of an animal is only three or four times that of the period at which it arrived at a state of puberty, birds should be much shorter lived, than experience shews. Swans have been known to live to 100 years; Geese to 70 or 80; and a Goldfinch to 20. The limitation of the Peacock's life should therefore not be according to this rule, but according to that general law which seems to govern the life of birds. Yet no Peacock has yet been known in this country to exceed that of ten or twelve years. And although, like many of the productions of warm countries, it reproduces in our cold climate, it is not yet so well naturalized, as not